

Senate Fish and Game Committee Hearing on HB 585
April 2, 2009

The Montana Outfitters and Guides Association supports HB 585.

HB 585 comes from the Private Lands/Public Wildlife Council who heard of the desire for nonresident family members to come home and hunt with the family. They also heard of the need to provide more access to public land that might be landlocked or in some way is currently inaccessible to hunters. HB 585 responds to both those needs.

- 500 new B-10 licenses and 500 new B-11 licenses will be available to nonresidents who are sponsored by residents to the second degree of kinship by blood or marriage. 2nd degree does not extend to cousins.
- The licenses will be priced at the current price for general draw B-10 and B-11 licenses – \$628 / \$328, respectively, plus the \$10 hunting access enhancement fee.
- These 1,000 new licenses are not a part of current quotas or targets.
- Nonresident applicants must have passed hunters education or have previously held a resident hunting license. They are family members who hunted here before they became nonresidents.
- The applicant must list all family members with whom he or she is eligible to hunt. Nonresidents hunting under these licenses must be accompanied in the field by an eligible family member.
- Excess applications in either pool will result in a drawing. Failure to succeed in the drawing will automatically put the applicant into the appropriate general drawing.
- Funds from these licenses will be deposited into a separate account and used to "acquire public hunting access to inaccessible public land, which may include obtaining hunting access through private land . . ."
- The pilot program is effective March 1, 2010 through March 1, 2014.
- A "Whereas" statement says department statistics will measure the outcome and determine whether the licenses **"have resulted in a net increase or decrease in hunting opportunities for resident hunters."** While there is nothing in the bill itself that calls for a department report to the next two legislatures, we understand that the report will be contained in that which is already mandated in 87-1-269 (2).
- The intent is to experience license years 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013. If the program is successful, the department will come to the 2013 Legislature and request an extension or a repeal of the termination date.
- HB 585 is worth the try.

This isn't an outfitter relief bill although outfitters could benefit as family members or as service providers for others. MOGA supports HB 585 because (1) it comes from the PL/PW and (2) it's in everyone's best interests to gain additional access to **public** lands.